

**Boise District (BD) Bureau of Land Management (BLM)  
Resource Advisory Council (RAC)  
Boise District Office, Sagebrush/Ponderosa Room  
October 26, 2004**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Council Members Present:** Don Weilmunster, Donna Griffin, Robert Amidon, Patric Cudmore, Sandra Mitchell, Gil Green, Brenda Richards, Neil Rimbey, John Robison, Rick Raymondi, Donna Bennett.

**Council Members Absent:** Robert Baker, Chris Salove, Ted Howard and Ken Reid.

**BLM Advisory Present:** Glen Secrist, Boise District Manager; K Lynn Bennett, BLM State Director; MJ Byrne, Public Affairs Specialist and Boise District RAC Coordinator.

**Other BLM Staff Present:** Mitch Jaurena, Acting Bruneau Field Office Manager; Ron Kay, Owyhee Field Office Manager; Jerry Taylor, Boise District Associate Manager; Andy Delmus, Acting BLM BD Fire Management Officer; Rosey Thomas, Four Rivers Field Office Manager; John Hatch, BLM Budget and Administrative Director.

**Other:** Layne Bangerter, State Director for Natural Resources, for Senator Mike Crapo's Office, and Becky Desmond, note taker.

**Statements attributed to individuals are not direct quotes unless so indicated.**

**Council Business, General Information, and Opening Remarks:** Chairman Weilmunster opened the meeting. Glen Secrist introduced the new RAC members: Donna Bennett, rancher and EMT specialist; Patric Cudmore, former Education Coordinator for Idaho Department of Fish and Game and Field Representative for the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation; and Neil Rimbey, University of Idaho range economist/professor. Following this the current RAC members introduced themselves and gave a brief background of their interests. Don recognized former RAC members Dr. Bill Platts, Ph. D. and Russ Heughins for their dedication and hard work

Glen reported that Howard Hedrick, former Lower Snake River District Associate Manager, was selected as the new Twin Falls District Manager. Then he introduced new BLM managers including: Jerry Taylor, Boise District Associate Manager (Jerome native, 28 years in BLM positions, recently worked in Vale, OR); Ron Kay, Owyhee Field Manager (12 years in state office out of 29 total in BLM, range programs in 6 states); Rosey Thomas, Four Rivers Field Office Manager (former District Fire Management Officer with 30 years as fire program experience); and Mitch Jaurena, Acting Bruneau Field Office Manager (retired 21-year Marine colonel, pilot, and environmental manager, degree in agricultural business, sheep rancher upbringing).

Glen then introduced the group to George Farrell, Boise District BLM Support Services Supervisor, who reported on progress of the new BLM building in Marsing for the Owyhee Field Office. The pre-fabricated building will house roughly 16 staff and has a projected move-in date of Dec. 1, 2004. Glen then discussed other BLM news: J.R. Epps and Andy Delmus will be taking over management responsibilities in the District's Fire Office; John

Hatch, Budget and Administrative Director, said that BLM's base funding has moved to be 50-60% "flex" funding; Jerry Taylor is working on resource coordination and consistency of interpretation (one of K Lynn's priority goals); Glen said he was more optimistic than ever right now. Don recognized Glen as having contributed to the success of the RAC because of his willingness to communicate and cooperate.

**Certification of Minutes:** There were two sets of minutes to certify--revised minutes from the May 26, 2004 meeting and the draft minutes from the August 24, 2004 meeting. The revised May minutes brought no further comment. The draft minutes for the August meeting included an e-mailed addition from Dr. Bill Platts, highlighted in red, on p.5, last paragraph, re: voting of a RAC representative at the Statewide Sage Grouse meeting. It said, "In this instance, however, the RAC gave this approval to vote at committee meetings when they passed a motion that I represent the RAC on the Statewide Sage grouse Committee." Brenda Richards questioned this insertion into the minutes. Robert Amidon and Gil Green said they interpreted Platt's insertion as an "illustration" of the previous sentence regarding RAC voting at the statewide sage grouse meeting. Brenda said she just wanted it to be clear since this had been the point of the long discussion held at the August RAC meeting. No one else had further comment. Brenda moved and Gil seconded that both sets of minutes be approved and certified. The draft August minutes were approved and certified with Bill's insertion.

**Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) on Wind Energy Development on BLM-Administered Lands in the Western United States--Review and Discussion of Executive Summary and Q's and A's.**

MJ referred members to the meeting notebook which contained four handouts on wind energy plus a disc. **ACTION:** She said the 90-day comment period ends as of December 9, 2004, and asked RAC members to specifically look at three sections of the draft PEIS: the executive summary; the best management practices; and the policy section. She also recommended that the RAC Subcommittee on Sage Grouse Habitat Management review these, and prepare comments that could be sent to other RAC Members for review. Comments could then be submitted from the RAC to BLM through Chairman Weilmunster. RAC members are also invited to comment as individuals.

Several members commented on wind energy proposals, mostly private, being proposed around the state. John Robison said conservationists are interested in both wind energy and possible effects on wildlife issues, including sage grouse. He agreed with the RAC review, and asked for a BLM presentation of all possible wind energy projects "in the pipeline" so that a possible cumulative effect could be studied. **ACTION:** The sage grouse subcommittee asked MJ for three hard copies of those three sections. She is also going to ask Jack Peterson, Senior Resource Management Specialist at BLM's State Office, to make this presentation on November 8, 2004, at the Boise District Office.

Miscellaneous comments: Rick Raymondi said the sage grouse subcommittee currently was two members short. MJ planned to send around a subcommittee sign-up sheet later in the meeting. Russ Heughins said that wildlife considerations extended beyond sage grouse, and that raptor migration and undulate wintering sites should also be considered. Glen said the Idaho Statesman had an article reviewing both President Bush's and Senator Kerry's

environmental policies and concluded they were quite similar. Glen offered to work with the Subcommittee. He also asked Patric Cudmore to fill one of the vacancies. Pat agreed. Glen will call Howard Hedrick to see if there could be any Twin Falls RAC participation.

**ACTION:** He said the Boise RAC subcommittee will compile written comments after the Peterson presentation and whatever meetings are set up, send these comments to MJ for distribution to the entire RAC. Then Don will forward the report to Glen, for his submittal to Director Clarke and State Director Bennett. There was some discussion of procedures for consensus, majority reports, and minority opinions.

**Break/Public Comments:** There were no public comments at this time. However, Rick said Russ had asked to continue to be a member of the RAC's Sage Grouse Habitat Management Subcommittee. This item was tabled to the afternoon.

### **District Fire Manager and Field Office Reports**

**Boise District Fire Office:** Andy Delmus, assistant fire management officer, reported that the fire season had been relatively slow; 130 staffers were present at its peak; 65 fires covering 4700 acres had occurred (normal five-year-average was 96 fires); crews were shipped to other parts of the country to provide fire assistance. In Boise, the focus was on fuels and prescribed burns. Future plans will include 68 prescribed burns covering 9500 acres, and the cutting of 4000 acres of juniper. Glen commented that hand-cutting of juniper was impressive, and that close-to-the-ground cuts avoid regeneration, and was useful in eliminating Juniper from mahogany stands. Other subjects: the Juniper Mountain Environmental Assessment (EA) covers 300,000 acres; the statewide Fire Management Plan is finished and is made up of seven BLM District plans. Two-thirds of fires are human-caused; one-third are lightning-caused. Rosey Thomas commented that the budget for fire-fighting preparedness is declining while the budget for fuels management is increasing, and that both budgets will have to be balanced, and consider local partnerships. She said there was no need for drill reseeding this year for rehab.

**Owyhee Field Office:** Ron Kay reported about on-going dealings with recreational programs in the Owyhee Front concerning off-road vehicles and trails; the Silver City and Juniper Mountain fire plans; two grazing hearings coming up on Antelope and Nickel Creek; the Snake River snail issue including a biological assessment and work with permittees; 29 grazing allotments still left to assess; rock permits (who has them and who doesn't); and a cultural resource issue in the Flint Land Sale.

**Bruneau Field Office:** Mitch Jaurena reported that he was dealing with nearly the same issues as Ron. The two field offices are splitting staff and equipment and "plowing through" the issues. He and two assistants, Myra Black and John Biar, are also reviewing the Bruneau Resource Management Plan (RMP), which he said was generally a quality document. He said the 31 Areas of Critical Environmental Concerns (ACEC's) were a big issue and that he wanted more thorough research and analysis of each one. The draft RMP-EIS will be made available to the public after this review.

**Four Rivers Field Office:** Rosey Thomas reported that 21 grazing decisions to deal with slickspot peppergrass had been appealed "all at once," basically because of the changing of "seasons of use": John Sullivan is the Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (NCA) Manager and is also in the process of developing an RMP. Land/realty actions include a review of the EIS for the Cambridge to Council power line, the Boise Foothills/northern Idaho

land exchange (purpose is to acquire open space in the Boise Foothills), the possible Birds of Prey/US Ecology land exchange, several community landfill exchanges, and requests for recreation or other public purpose leases. The Foothills Environmental Education Center on 8<sup>th</sup> St. is under construction and the curriculum is being developed. Other: an act of trespass on Bennett Mountain is under investigation; projects to reduce fuels around Placerville and Idaho City are being developed; and a community-requested landscape-scale project in Garden Valley area is under consideration. Rosey also has the snail issue, rock permit issue, standards and guides, route designations, and wildlife studies to work on. Brenda asked how trespass issues were dealt with. Rosey said there had to be enough investigation and facts to prove intent. Glen cited the increasing subdivisions and landscaping trends and said that the theft of rock from public lands is becoming a huge issue. He asked for any reports from members about possible illegal resource use, including dates, areas, and license plates, because it is not a "Mom and Pop" matter anymore.

**Public Comments:** none.

K Lynn Bennett, BLM state director, greeted the new RAC members and expressed his appreciation for their willingness to serve. He said the RAC was a frontline for the public, and cited the president's executive order that requires the BLM to practice "cooperative conservation" using local as well as agency and tribal input. He cited two major issues as being the clash between sage grouse and wind energy on public lands, and off-road vehicle use. He predicted major changes, but not without public input.

**Working Lunch:** After Glen told a few aviation jokes, the meeting continued with **Subcommittee reports.**

**1. Resource Management Plans--**Gil Green first briefly reported on the Juniper Mountain burn field trip. He also provided a handout on the Resource Management Plan update. He said more work was needed on route alternatives. Route designations are basically "closed," "open," or "limited to a designated use." He said more surveys are needed, as well as more study on the criteria to be used for those designations. There is an RMP and OHV subcommittee meeting planned for Nov. 9, 2004, 4 pm, Boise District Office, to discuss that criteria. Glen complimented Gil, Mike O'Donnell, Mary Jones, and the subcommittee members for their hard work.

**2. Sage Grouse Subcommittee--**Rick Raymondi reported that this group did not meet since the last RAC meeting. MJ said the statewide sage grouse strategy document was out for review. However, Russ said it was out only for certain groups and individuals and was now undergoing a science and technical review. He said it should be out for public review in December 2004. MJ will provide hard copies to the 8 people who requested them. Russ will contact MJ when the document is ready.

Glen said that K Lynn had again made clear that the BLM's sage grouse plan will be whichever local plan is pertinent provided it is PECE-compliant. If there is no local plan or it is inadequate, then the state plan is the fall-back plan. K Lynn said that BLM's national sage grouse strategy policy will come out on December 5, 2004. But if an individual state's plan is adequate, then that is the plan which will be used. If there is no state plan, the management actions of the BLM will be determined by the national strategy. When a state's plan is

adopted, the signature page will include the BLM. He said before he signs anything he wants feedback and recommendations from each RAC, hopefully by January. MJ suggested a review by the RAC sage grouse subcommittee before the full RAC meeting in February 2005. K Lynn said timely BLM and RAC comments were needed in order to affect a listing of sage grouse.

By this time Glen had checked the RAC charter, which provides that any non-RAC member could serve on a subcommittee, provided that the RAC members and the district Manager agreed to the inclusion. However, technical review people must be federal employees. Don asked the RAC if there was any objection to Russ continuing as a member of the sage grouse subcommittee. Hearing none, it was agreed that he could continue.

**3. OHV and Transportation Management--**Sandra Mitchell provided a handout and reported on the August subcommittee meeting, which was a review of the Chalk Hills plan, part of the Owyhee Front between the Mud Flat Rd. and Hwy. 51. Mary Jones will make this plan available to the RAC--deadline for public input unknown at this time. Glen commented that maps showing routes and trails needed "landmarks" so people could recognize where they were. Sandra said that OHV'ers were both for route designation and afraid of it.

**4. Rangeland Standards and Guides--**Brenda Richards reported on the year-long internal review that BLM did, looking for an improvement and consistency in the way that standards and guides were applied across the state. K Lynn had invited the RAC to participate. She discussed the BLM instructional memo that went out re: allotment review form. There was never an attempt to change the S & G's, only apply them consistently. There is an updated determination form, as well as identified steps for addressing threatened or endangered species. BLM grazing permittees, upon request, may be granted "applicant status." When there are T & E species issues in their allotments. Copies of the Rangeland Standards and Guides are available from Boise District Office.

K Lynn agreed that the BLM had to address the inconsistencies. He said that, more to the issue, he wants future RAC involvement in new proposed grazing regulations. He said the new regulations, when out, will call for "long-term monitoring." He said BLM needs to look at the allotments more often to determine long-term effects and "trends." Robert wondered how this was to be funded. K Lynn wasn't sure, but reiterated that BLM must manage the vegetation of public lands. Glen discussed what he hoped would be the answer--the research on and use of 100-foot altitude ultra-lights with GPS, high-resolution digital cameras, and immediate computer data storage and retrieval. He said trend studies can be done on 30,000 acres in four hours. **ACTION:** He will ask Dr. Steven Seefeldt from the ARS Dubois Sheep Station to make a presentation to the RAC at a future meeting. Neil Rimby said "ground-truthing" would still be needed during the transitional phase.

### **Owyhee Initiative Briefing**

Glen said this Initiative Agreement, which now includes the Shoshone-Paiute tribe, the Owyhee County commission, and the various representative groups was "an historic achievement." He said BLM does not have a position but supports the public involvement and collaboration. K Lynn commended the Initiative Working Group on its three years of hard work. He said it will serve as a model even if it never makes it all the way to legislation and that it had already attracted national attention.

The RAC meeting notebook included a news article from the Statesman. Brenda said the actual document was not yet quite available because the Owyhee County Commissioners would get it first. Sandra Mitchell said the collaborative process was an “acquired taste” and that she wouldn’t be hungry for it again anytime soon. She said it was tedious and difficult. As far as recreation and transportation goes, she said it was not a dramatic change from what is now being done, which is that ATV’s must stay on designated routes and trails. Snowmobiles must stay in designated areas. The timeline agreed to by BLM is that within one year of the Initiative’s enactment, a travel plan for the Owyhee Front will be in place. Within three years after enactment, a travel plan for areas outside the Owyhee Front will be in place. Sandra said that she, as representative for the recreationists, abstained from voting on the Initiative.

Brenda discussed the diversity of groups within the working group. Neil commented that when he and JD Wulforth did their recent economic impact study of ranching in Owyhee County, they were struck by how the interviewees expressed great trust for the Initiative group, even though they knew they would not necessarily be for some of the recommendations. Brenda also discussed the “discovery of the desert” by recreationists during these past three years. She said there was more demand on this multiple-use land interspersed with private land, but that the Taylor Grazing Act was also clear on the permitted use. She said the ranchers support multiple-use, and that BLM gave advice and support to the group. She said the process was very exciting, and expressed optimism that the tribes had decided to participate after declining at the beginning. The tribes signed an MOU with the county and will have bi-monthly meetings with the commissioners.

Some highlights: 1) Board of Directors made up of the original work group plus; 2) Annual review process of the plan; 3) Scientific review of BLM grazing decisions (which will not hold up the BLM management process); 4) Conservation and Research Center which will feature an educational process, landscape-scale research, monitoring, inventories, wilderness management, fire management, and recreational management; 5) County/BLM cooperative agreements on funding and sharing of opportunities; 6) Wilderness designations; 7) Wild and Scenic River designations.

Don congratulated Brenda and Sandra and said this was the “most outstanding work done by individuals” he’d seen in all his years in the RAC. He then introduced Layne Bangerter, who discussed the next steps to be taken by Sen. Crapo. Sen. Crapo had backed the Initiative from the onset, and was now ready to take it to the Energy Committee of the Congress possibly as soon as the “lame duck” session following the elections. He said that Wild and Scenic River designation comes with certain federal water rights regulations, but that “senior rights are to be left intact.” Water language is not standard and needs “to be nailed down.” Details need to be worked out. No one will be going out of business, but there will be some AUM reduction or retirement. AUM reduction is a permanent reduction of a federal right “in the public interest” so a value must be assigned. He said litigation is far too prevalent and that collaborative initiatives are “far better.” Arlen Lancaster, another of Senator Crapo’s legislative assistants, and very experienced, will help draft the legislation.

Glen asked how Sen. Crapo will decide what possible changes would impact the integrity of the Initiative. Bangerter said that Crapo knows how to work in the Senate and has said that certain commitments from groups must stand firm. Rep. Simpson is in support. He said Congress will not “paint itself into a corner” but that we are “looking for as hard release language as we can get.”

Jerry Taylor asked what the comparison to the Steen’s Mountain Agreement was. He said implementation was difficult in that case and the Wild and Scenic River language was a problem. Bangerter said the lesson learned was the creation of the Board of Directors. Brenda said the working group learned what NOT to do from Steen’s Mountain. The Board of Directors is charged with “institutional memory” of the purpose and goals of the Initiative.

**Public Comments--none.**

### **Mobile Weed Washing Demonstration**

RAC members went outside to observe the new weed washing machine, mounted on a trailer, which will help in weed abatement and in meeting terms of the lepidium CCA. Mitch Jaurena explained how it worked and the other uses and benefits of the mobile unit.

### **Follow-Up Actions**

Dates for future RAC meetings: January 25, April 19, August 23, 2005. Locations will be announced. The agenda for the next meeting will be largely the review of RMP alternatives. Glen invited any interested RAC member to attend BLM District Management Team (DMT) meetings held the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays of each month at the District Office.

Minutes prepared by  
Becky Desmond, Note taker

Certified by

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_/date 2-08-05  
Don Weilmunster  
RAC Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_/date 2/08/05  
Glen Secrist  
District Manager, BD

### **Appendix**

1. Resource Management Plan Update--Gil Green handout.
2. OHV Subcommittee Meeting--Sandra Mitchell handout.
3. Draft Environmental Impact Statement Focuses on Wind Energy Development on BLM-Administered Public Lands, contact David Quick. Meeting notebook.
4. Wind Energy Development FAQ’s. Meeting notebook.
5. Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement on Wind Energy Development on BLM-Administered Lands in the Western United States. Meeting notebook.
6. Owyhee Initiative, Statesman news article. Meeting notebook.